

AUDIT OF THE LAPPEENRANTA-LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LUT

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1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- HEI's self-assessment

Decision-making structure ensuring continuous development

To strengthen the impact and active development of education, LUT has clarified the roles and division of responsibilities in education management. The vice-rectors, director of international and study affairs, deans, heads of DSc programmes, heads of degree programmes and heads of the BSc or MSc programmes are responsible for the development of education. They ensure that development needs arising from the systematic monitoring of performance, feedback surveys, scientific research or world of work will be addressed.

Learning outcomes – the main impact of education

Objectives for student learning are defined in programme learning outcomes, which are operationalised on courses and evaluated based on specific assessment means. The alignment of the goals at the BSc/MSc programme and course levels is ensured by the curriculum tool, which helps in evaluating the appropriateness of learning activities, assessment methods and the student workload. Students' self-assessment through graduate surveys is utilised in assessing competence development. The School of Business and Management (LBM) has introduced an intensive Assurance of Learning model to evaluate student learning. Assessments of student competences are utilised in curriculum work.

Cooperation with external stakeholders

LUT's strength is its active, research-based cooperation with companies, which inspires the development of education and definition of learning outcomes. Supported by LUT [Career Services](#) and the [Firmatiimi](#) corporate outreach team, companies and business representatives are involved in education as visiting lecturers, thesis commissioners, assignment and internship providers and future employers. Information on competence needs and trends in the world of work is obtained in the university's strategy work and board and advisory board meetings. LUT has agilely modified its programme portfolio and launched [online MSc programmes](#) in engineering to serve different target groups. The university responds flexibly to the competence needs of business life through DSc education and lifelong learning possibilities. LUT has strengthened its lifelong learning services consisting of [open university](#) and [continuous education](#) and renewed its [degree education for part time students](#).

Internationalisation assuring high quality education

Internationalisation has been a driving force in education development at all degree levels. It improves the degree programmes' curricula and the competences of students to act in and influence the global world of work. Internationalisation means active [partnerships with foreign universities](#), providing high-quality exchange possibilities and benchmarking, and participating in [international networks](#). [International accreditations](#) serve as a valuable checkpoint and support for the development of education.

Established indicators and stakeholder feedback procedures

The systematic monitoring of programme performance and collaborative review of feedback reports form the basis of annual BSc and MSc programme reviews. Statistics (Figure 4) and indicators through which the attractiveness, quality and impact of programmes are monitored reveal the strengths and development targets in education. The doctoral school monitors the progress of DSc students and provides reports to schools. Profiling the programme portfolio and developing career services are examples of development activities based on the monitoring.

Several channels provide feedback on education from a variety of stakeholders: students on courses, first-year students and graduates, commissioners of theses and alumni. The university utilises feedback compiled by its partners, e.g. the student union. The response rate of graduate surveys is excellent, but the low response rate of course feedback is a challenge, which has been tackled e.g. by responding to feedback. Course feedback cooperation with student guilds, regular feedback events, and the Teacher of the Year Award based on course feedback have strengthened the feedback culture. In 2017, degree programme feedback workshops were introduced, and feedback on education is discussed once a year in a university management committee meeting. In DSc education, feedback is discussed in the doctoral school steering group and development targets are agreed upon. The quality management of customer-driven continuing education is also based on a strong feedback culture and interaction with participants.

University Services help achieve the goals

University Services support achieving both LUT's operational and strategic goals, and the performance of support services is assessed based on the performance of the university. University Services provide specific services, e.g. career services and university pedagogical training, to assure the impact and continuous development of education. The management of University Services works in close cooperation with LUT administration, ensuring that the goals for the university can be reached. Regular feedback surveys, institutional meetings, and interaction with customers are channels for feedback to University Services. Numerous concrete measures prove the continuous improvement of support services, e.g. training for DSc students' supervisors. To increase the efficiency of supporting functions, the systematic analysis of processes has started in 2020.

Strengths

Commitment to international accreditations of degree programmes

Well-established indicators to monitor the quality of education

Procedures for utilising feedback inspiring development

Enhancement areas

Information system for monitoring study progress

More automatised course feedback system

Establishing the support service process development work

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

- Assessment of the audit team

LUT should continue its work to improve course evaluations

In cooperation with the student unions and student associations on campus, the university regularly collects online feedback from the students. Teacher tutors and heads of degree programmes are visible as responsible people, and students may address them as well for initiating improvement. According to the audit visit, most teaching staff improve courses due to feedback from students, and direct discussions with professors and teachers have led to improvement in teaching and assessment methodology. However, the response rates to the course feedback survey are low, which makes it difficult to close the PDCA cycle appropriately. This is not a phenomenon restricted to LUT, as evaluation fatigue seems to be a general problem among students. According to the discussions during the audit visit, one reason could be that

students do not see any effect of their ideas for improvement, as feedback is usually collected once the course is over, and the teacher for the course might not be the same person in the next term. The university should review current routines for course evaluations and take measures to strengthen the role of course evaluations in their quality system. Such work should include routines for collecting feedback, which can take into account the time and periodicity of the feedback collection, as well as qualitative methods and analysis of documents, which are produced anyway (so-called non-responsive methods). This could include a systematic analysis of learning diaries or a closer look at student chats in the flipped classroom. LUT staff interviewed during the audit visit made the last two suggestions themselves, and this approach would comply with both the size and innovative spirit of the university. The university should also consider a more systematic reflection of the feedback results and a discussion of possible solutions for improvement with the students, which might be beneficial for response rates as well.

International accreditations have enhanced degree-level quality management

The university collects feedback and data throughout the year with a strong focus on graduates' performance in working life. There are key figures that are monitored regularly on various organisational levels. These key figures concern, for instance, employment rates and salary levels of graduates. The audit team highlights this systematic approach with clear responsibilities between management, schools, administration and third space, although the extensive data might sometimes be difficult to handle. In addition to that, international accreditations have contributed considerably to the enhancement of quality work on the programme level. The interviewees highlighted international accreditation for the introduction of new, systematic approaches to quality assurance at LUT University. During the past few years, the university has introduced continuous improvements according to the accreditation results and has worked on learning outcomes, their implementation and the employability of graduates. Therefore, these accreditations have been much more for the university than only a seal from an accreditation body.

As far as the changing needs of society are concerned, the university receives input for enhancement from external stakeholders on the University Board and various advisory boards. The university offers various opportunities for continuous learning, which is more a grown concept than a strategic or systematic approach. The university is aware of this issue, but according to the interviews, much depends on available funding as well.

The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services

Support services rely on direct feedback from the students. There are special workshops and surveys addressing various needs of the students for different purposes as well as an open feedback possibility in the intranet. The university acknowledges the need of adapting service to user groups with different educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Regular formal and

informal meetings on the support service directors' level as well as within the teams ensure that the units reflect upon the feedback results and also upcoming issues, such as the pandemic. Theme-specific meetings complete the enhancement of the service quality. In addition to that, interviewees emphasised the importance of their national network to learn about best practices at other institutions and apply them to the needs of LUT.